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A PRACTICAL METHOD OF PRESENTING THE LYRIC METERS OF HORACE

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This paper seeks to present a practical method, for it should not be forgotten that while learned men are so furiously disagreeing, we humble pedagogues are confronting, not a theory, but a condition. Certain benighted freshmen must shortly be taught to scan the *Odes* in some fashion, or we who teach must lamely confess *adhuc sub iudice lis est*; and, being neither judge nor jury, we must postpone the whole subject until a decision is handed down from the higher courts.

Having attained to a *modus docendi* that seems rational as a method, and certainly is productive of tangible results, the writer is moved to communicate it.

It might conciliate the reader to avoid entirely the field of controversy. But alack! One cannot even make a beginning without coming plump upon this matter of accent and ictus. Certain scholars are serenely sure that Latin was pronounced in poetry precisely as in prose. Did the ictus then count for nothing at all? No one goes so far as to say that. Very well. When Horace writes an Adonic, *Térruit urbem*, and begins the following Lesser Sapphic with *Térruit gentés*, we are warranted in suspecting that there was a recognizable difference in the two utterances of the same word. If it is claimed that the two consonants, final and initial, would produce substantially the same effect in prose as in verse, we have only to recall *ibimus*, *ibimús* (ii. 17. 10) and *Póstume*, *Póstumé* (ii. 14. 1). True, identity in metrical value, when the word is a trisyllable, is impossible in the *Odes* except in the ten-syllable Alcaic. It is perhaps an additional evidence of the poet's preference for avoiding such identity, that only one instance of it is found in his Lesser Alcaics; namely, *rapuit rapiétque*, in ii. 13. 20. But if there was a difference due to the ictus,

then words were not pronounced in poetry exactly as they were in prose.

Again, when Professor Bennett says (*Gr.* 366. 5), "In every foot the long syllable naturally receives the greater prominence. This prominence is called ictus," he ignores more facts than the limits even of an elementary grammar would seem to warrant. What of the spondee, not mentioned, by the way, among "the most important kinds of feet" (366. 2)? The only important kinds, it seems, are those which this new rule can be made to fit. And what of the spondee as a substitute for the iambus? Was it uttered in precisely the same way with the ictus on either syllable?

In the light of such a definition, how is the learner to comprehend the meter of such a line as i. 21. 2: "Intonsum, pueri, dicite Cynthia?" The first word has three long syllables. Furthermore, the (accented) penult must have been distinctly longer than either of the others (cf. *Quin.* 9. 4. 84), since the vowel had approximately twice the length of the *i* or the *u*, and is followed by two consonants besides. Yet we are told that "ictus was not accent—neither stress accent nor musical accent—but was simply the quantitative prominence inherent in a long syllable" (Bennett *Gr.* 366, footnote). So then *intonsum* must have an ictus on each syllable, and the biggest one (really a quantitative protuberance) on the penult, where Horace, poor man, didn't know there was any at all.

Well, this is progress; it is always useful to discover the uselessness of any alleged principle. We may take heart now and grope our way through the haze, assured that there may be good reason for regarding ictus as some sort of distinguishable stress; what sort, is for the wise men to decide, if they can. *Lite pendente*, each teacher must evolve his own private ictus from his inner consciousness. Any kind will help our pupils to catch the swing of a line better than none at all.

The method to be outlined concerns itself chiefly with the logaoedic lines. In a single term devoted to the *Odes* and *Epodes*, selection is imperative. Dactylic lines should need no special treatment after Vergil, and iambic lines are still easier. So much for the *Epodes*.

As for the *Odes*, when Horace thought so ill of a meter or of his success with it that he did not care to try it as many as three times

in four books, we may well excuse our students from wrestling with it at all. This removes from special consideration twelve systems out of the nineteen essayed by our poet. This may seem rather drastic; almost any task might be made easy if twelve-nineteenths of it could be eliminated at the outset. But really the elimination is trivial. Including the "Secular Hymn," we have in the *Odes* a total of 3,102 lines. The meters here disregarded include 176 lines, or less than 6 per cent. Of these, indeed, 96 are dactylic, leaving less than 3 per cent. not included in the present survey, or in the student's previous studies.

Further, it is best not to harrow the feelings of our budding philologists by asking them to learn the *names* of all these strophes or systems. The Sapphic and the Alcaic are worth while. These terms are really distinctive, reminiscent of deathless names, and in universal use. The Asclepiad meters are differently styled in different books, and for that reason, if for no other, the entire traditional terminology may wisely be set aside. For example, *Carmen* i. 3 is classed metrically as "Asclepiadean II," by Allen and Greenough; "First Asclepiadean Stanza, Distich," by Harkness; "First Asclepiad Strophe," in Smith's *Odes*; and so on. *Carmen* i. 8 is not classed as strophæic in Moore's edition, but appears as Asclepiadean I (*minor*), in Allen and Greenough, and as Asclepiad (-ic, -ean) strophe or stanza in others. It is better for our pupils "not to know quite so much than to know so many things that ain't so," especially when none of them is of the slightest importance.

Strophes are composed of lines. Knowing the lines, the learner has the key to the entire situation. Now the seven meters to be studied contain only nine different lines. After refreshing our students' memories regarding the necessary feet, the caesura, and elision, we may set them at once to identifying detached lines taken at random, by the use of a chart, put upon the blackboard, somewhat like the tabular arrangement on the opposite page.

The twelve-syllable line is so placed as to emphasize its identity with the Greater Asclepiad minus the choriambus in parenthesis. The braces are intended to suggest that the Pherecratic and Glyconic are used (by Horace) only in connection with the Lesser Asclepiad, the Adonic always with the Lesser Sapphic, and the Alcaic lines always in conjunction and in the order given. It may aid the beginner to

call his attention to the fact that in the Lesser Sapphic the first syllable must be long and the second short, while in the Greater Alcaic the same is true of the second and third syllables. It is also true that if the anacrusis be transferred to the end of a Greater Alcaic the quantities will be identical with the Lesser Sapphic.

LINES TO BE STUDIED


No. of Syllables	GREATER ASCLEPIAD				
16	Tú nē	quáēsř-	rís	(scírě nē- fās-)	quém mřhř quém tí- bí ^
			LE	SSER ARCLEPIAD	
12	Māēcē-	nás ātā-	vís	é-	dř-tě ré-gř- bús ^
				PHERECRATIC	
7	Quámvis	Póntfā	pínūs		
				GLYCONIC	
8	Síl-vāē	fřlř-ā	nóbř- lřs ^		
				LESSER SAPPHIC	
11	Děx tē-	rā sā-	crās	iācū-lā- tūs	ārc
				ADONIC	
5				Těrrřt	řrbēm
				GREATER ALCAIC	
11	Vix-:érě	fórtēs	ánt(e)Āgā-	mémnō-	nā ^
			9-SYLLABLE	ALCAIC	
9	Le-:ní-te	clāmō-	rēm sō-	dālēs	
				LESSER (10-SYLLABLE) ALCAIC	
10	ét cūbř-	tō řēmā-	nétě	prěssō	

The marking of these lines, too, differs widely in grammars and editions. Whether the elaborate system of Allen and Greenough, with its special signs for irrational spondees (trochees), the "cyclic dactyl," etc., is worth while, each teacher must decide for himself. When he has decided, if he expects results, he must require the absolute mastery of these nine lines, number of syllables, marking, caesuras, and the proper (?) rhythmical movement of each. This, no doubt, is the weak point in the entire scheme, possibly a fatal weakness. The mastery of *anything*, except the code of football signals, or the latest twosteps, scarcely appeals to the up-to-date college student. But after eliminating the unimportant and the useless, the instructor may properly insist that his students shall be letter-perfect in these nine lines.

But when this scheme of lines is fairly well in hand, most freshmen are still far enough from a practical command of the scansion. Many have but the faintest idea of English rhythm, and care little or nothing for poetical form. A feeling for this can certainly be awakened most easily by English lines. Tennyson's "Ode to Milton" supplies capital Alcaics, though he was following Catullus and the Greeks, no doubt, rather than Horace, and therefore does not attempt to follow strictly the Horatian requirement of a spondee before the dactyl and in the nine-syllable line.

The movement of our poet's Sapphic strophe is suggested by the following stanza, in which compound words and a plethora of consonants do duty in place of the Latin spondees:

Now the cloud-wrapt Jove, in the might of thunder,
Fiercely smites Rome's towers; and the earthquake under
Heaves her rock-ribbed hills, till they part asunder,
Yawning in fissures.

It ought not to need extended argument to prove that, when Horace took pains to place spondees in certain positions, it was simply because he preferred them, thought the verses less musical without them; and that to call them trochees, utter them as trochees, or represent them by  is quite indefensible. Why should the poet make his *carmina operosa* much more laborious by insisting on long syllables, only to have them read as short? Even the industry of the Matinian bee would not be equal to such a useless task.

The Greater Asclepiad moves thus:

Waves surge shoreward apace (squadrons of waves) trampling
the shifting sands.

By omitting the phrase in parenthesis, the line serves also as a model for the Lesser Asclepiad. The Pherecratic and Glyconic are identical with the Asclepiad lines through the first six syllables, so that separate models are scarcely necessary, though they can be easily framed, if any teacher prefers.

The traditional names, it was said, for the Asclepiad meters might better be disregarded. The only objection from the class-room point of view is the consequent lack of a method, at once brief and intelligible, of designating these meters. The remedy is simple. The method

used in all our church hymnals for describing the less usual meters is ready to our hand. For example, "Now the day is over," is 6.5, 6.5, or more briefly, 6's, 5's.

In this way our five Asclepiad meters may be designated, less cumbrously than in the books, and far more clearly, as follows: In Book i, the first ode is 12's, the third 8's and 12's, the fifth 12. 12. 7. 8, the sixth 12's and 8's, and the eleventh 16's. These names give bottom facts that will remain facts, no matter which way the winds of discussion may veer. Of themselves, they are seen to be worth knowing.

It may be urged with some force against this method of emphasizing the number of syllables in a line, that the beginner might be misled. A normal iambic trimeter (e. g., *Beatus ille*, etc., *Ep.* ii) might be taken for a Lesser Asclepiad, an iambic dimeter for a Glyconic. But the method makes no pretensions to universality; its sole purpose is, within a strictly limited field, to give the student a grip on vital facts in the briefest possible time. After mastering these seven meters, it will be easy for him to take up less usual lines, if he so desires.

Light may be thrown upon this whole question of scansion from another quarter. We are dealing with lyrics, that is, poetry that may be sung. Obviously Horace had little energy to spend on "woful ballads to a mistress' eyebrows," and few of his pieces would gain by being set to music; but they must be singable.

What then do we suppose was accomplished when the Horatian thumb was executing its immortal wriggle (iv. 6. 36) in directing the *Carmen saeculare*? Was the poet thrumming the lyre to remind the chorus where the prose accent belonged? Scarcely. Musicians should easily assure themselves that, whatever else he did, he was certainly marking the coincidence of metrical ictus and musical accent. If it is possible to write music for any of the odes which shall match every ictus with an accented note, every long syllable with a long note, and every short syllable with a short note, the result ought to be interesting and might conceivably be instructive.

In the specimen submitted, the melody alone is given. The close connection of each strain with the following matches well with the sense of such an ode as ii. 10, in which no one of the six strophes admits even a comma at the end of an eleven-syllable line.

Au - re - am quis - quis me - di - o - cri - ta - tem di - li -

git, tu - tus ca - ret ob - so - le - ti sor - di - bus tec -

ti, ca - ret in - vi - den - da so - bri - us au - la.....

Simple as this is, so far as the writer is aware, nothing of the kind has ever before been done. To sing Sapphics to such a hymn tune as Fleming ("O Holy Savior,"), or to some melody distorted for the purpose, as in Lord's "Rivi Tiburtini," may be interesting to music-lovers, but is certainly the reverse of instructive. A student with a quick ear for tune and time has only to memorize the melody given above and at once he has the scansion of the Sapphic strophe and the traditional rhythm as well.

Music fulfilling the same conditions, is possible for the Alcaic strophe, sweet and tender for the *Eheu fugaces* (ii. 14), bold and rollicking for the *Nunc est bibendum* (i. 37), and also for the various Asclepiad strophes. It is possible, no doubt, to exaggerate the significance of these facts; but if the Horatian meters ever deserved to be called lyric, it is not impossible that the reading of such verse was a sort of intoning, and had quite as much in common with musical accent as with the accent of prose.

But this is theorizing. "Quam ob rem ad illa prima redeamus eaque ipsa concludamus aliquando." Is scansion worth while in this eminently practical age? Yes, if poetry is worth while. Yes, once more, if a knowledge of quantities is worth while. No extant Latin literature affords such aid in mastering quantity as the *Odes* of Horace. That which constitutes the charm of the hexameter, its endless variety, puzzles the beginner and leaves him uncertain at the end of many a line whether the rhythm he has caught is the poet's or his own. But in the *Odes*, with exceptions so few as to be

negligible, all is as exact as mathematics. Even the tyro, once he has mastered his nine lines, can determine quantities not hidden absolutely, without resorting to his lexicon.

The aid afforded by scansion in translating is by no means to be despised. For example, in the last fifteen lines of i. 3 the length of final *a* is shown by the meter eight times, the three long *a*'s indicating unmistakable ablatives.

It is easy for the scholarly mind to look with fine scorn upon men and methods that emphasize the practical. Knowledge for its own sake, the search for truth rather than truth already found, the joy of wresting secrets from the linguistic Sphinx—these are the watchwords in many a study and in some classrooms. But in the classic field, as much as in any, there is need to distinguish sharply between essentials and non-essentials. The building is intended to be permanent, the scaffolding comes down. To burden our undergraduate students with a multitude of technical terms of varying significance, a mass of principles that have an extremely limited application, and a lot of conflicting theories besides, is “worse than a crime, it’s a blunder.”